

Legislative Presentation of the American Legion

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I thank you both, Chairman Filner and Chairman Akaka, for holding this joint hearing.

I am always encouraged to see the two chambers unite for the single goal of providing the highest attention and respect to those who have served and sacrificed to protect our nation.

Let me take a moment to simply thank the veterans who are here with us today - for your service and sacrifice - Thank you.

I would also like to thank The American Legion for their leadership and tremendous support for the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill. As you know, as recent as August 1st of this past month, veterans started receiving college education benefits under the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill.

We promised higher education to our service members when they joined, and we are finally following through on the promise. As a former teacher, I know that education is a powerful tool. Together, we are now making it possible for our veterans - active duty, national guard, and Reserves - to empower themselves by furthering their education.

Let me also thank The American Legion for being an important partner in passing the recent Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Bill, which included \$48.2 billion in Advanced Funding for the VA.

Like you, I believe that veteran's healthcare should not be compromised by delays in the congressional budget cycle. Advanced funding will ensure that the delivery of care is more reliable and timely.

Throughout the country, and in my district, The American Legion serves as one of the strongest advocates for veterans of today's wars as well as those from previous generations.

They are doing this with an expansive network of over 2-million members, men and women, in nearly 15,000 American Legion posts worldwide. The American Legion members and their national representatives are well aware of what it takes to welcome veterans and service members home from overseas.

As we sit here today, we are all aware of the bureaucratic red tape facing disabled veterans in our country. We have commissioned numerous studies, heard hours of testimony, and devoted billions of dollars towards fixing these problems. Even though we have made progress, more work needs to be done.

As Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, I have had the opportunity to explore issues from sharing of medical records to disability rating disparities to ensuring our veterans have the highest quality and standard control when they receive treatment in the VA system.

I am proud of the progress we are making, and with the support of veterans support organizations like The American Legion we can do better.

Our nation's veterans served honorably to protect us and our country. The least we can do is fight to provide the benefits and services they have earned when they come home.

I yield back the balance of my time.